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The CIA at SU

The CIA's reluctance to release information on its covert activities at Syracuse University has prompted SU's student newspaper, *The Daily Orange*, to file a lawsuit against the agency.

The suit, filed last week in U.S. District Court in Utica by the *Daily Orange*, former Managing Editor Howard Mansfield and current Editor-in-Chief Scot French, alleges that the CIA has violated the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) by not adequately responding to an FOIA request made by Mansfield in December 1977. Mansfield had requested access to "information relating to all past and present relationships between the CIA and Syracuse University, including information about research, recruitment, intelligence operations and surveillance of students."

CIA Director Stansfield Turner and George W. Owens, CIA information and privacy coordinator, are named as individual defendants in the suit, which asks for the court to "order defendants to produce the requested documents for inspection and copying."

During the past 17 months, Mansfield has made several follow-up requests for the documents, and was told in a Dec. 22, 1978, letter from Owens that "it is our best estimate that it will take another two months to complete the processing of your request." However, the CIA has yet to comply with the request.

"We know the CIA was here on campus," says Mansfield, noting that the Washington-based Campaign to Stop Government Spying (now known as the Campaign for Political Rights) last year released a two-page CIA document outlining various student demonstrations at the SU campus between 1967 and 1970. The document, dated Jan. 5, 1971, detailed "student unrest and disruptive activities" targeted at the CIA, the ROTC and Dow Chemical Co.

According to the CIA document, "Although no current note has been taken of it, fairly recent information reflects a chapter of SDS [the Students for a Democratic Society] on campus, and other radical organizations are believed to exist there. Racial troubles and radical political activities at Syracuse can be expected to follow the national pattern."

The agency appears to have kept an especially close watch on David Ifshin, SU's Student Association president in 1970, who, according to the document, "began his political involvement while still a junior high school student and continued it through his Wheaton High School days and on to Syracuse." The CIA called Ifshin, a former National Student Association president, "imaginative and charismatic," and credited him with "the beginning and the sustaining of political radicalism on the Syracuse campus."

Ifshin, now a Washington, D.C., lawyer, says he made a personal FOIA request for his CIA and FBI files in 1975, and received "several thousand pages of material."

In February 1978, SU became one of the first universities in the country to adopt guidelines for dealing with intelligence agencies. While the guidelines permit the university and its

faculty to enter into non-secret research and consulting contracts with the CIA, they ban most covert intelligence activities on campus.

With financial backing from the local chapter of the New York Civil Liberties Union and SU Student Association, the *Daily Orange* has secured SU College of Law Professors Daan Braveman and Gary Kelder to argue the case in court.

Linda DeStefano, executive director of the Central New York chapter of the NYCLU, says she suspects that agencies like the CIA and FBI try to stall when asked to release documents because "they don't want the public to see the illegal and unconstitutional activities" they have perpetrated on American citizens. The FBI has gone as far as calling for a moratorium on granting FOIA requests.

Braveman says he feels the CIA is delaying release of the SU documents in hopes that the *Daily Orange* will drop its FOIA request. "Maybe it takes a long time to put this information together," he says, "but I can't believe it takes 17 months."

However, CIA spokesman Dale Peterson says a 17-month wait for information on agency activities is "not unique. All university requests take at least one year." The CIA must "research over two dozen resources" to comply with the SU request, he adds.

According to Peterson, the CIA gets 4,000 to 5,000 FOIA requests a year, and currently has a backlog of 2,800 requests and 300 administrative appeals. He says the CIA will spend \$3 million this year processing FOIA requests, and has 110 full-time employees doing nothing but researching these requests.

"We're trying to work on this thing as much as we can," says Peterson. "But responding to university requests takes longer than some of the others."

Braveman expects that, under the pressure of a pending lawsuit, the CIA probably will release at least part of its files on activities at SU. But Peterson at CIA hinted that the agency may instead answer the complaint the same way it has answered Mansfield for nearly 1½ years—wait a little longer. It then will be up to a judge to decide whether or not to push the CIA to comply with the request. The CIA has until mid-August to decide what its next step will be.

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